

Welcome Address

Takekazu OGURA
Chairman of the Agriculture, Forestry and
Fisheries Research Council

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Guests, and Participants

It is with great pleasure that I extend my most sincere greetings and best wishes to all the participants in this symposium on behalf of the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Research Council of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and in particular, I would like to extend a cordial welcome to the delegates from abroad.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Japan has been promoting research programmes on tropical agriculture since 1966 with the aim of contributing something to the development of agricultural technology in the tropical and sub-tropical regions, in close cooperation with many countries in those regions. In order to implement the tropical agriculture research programmes more effectively, the Tropical Agriculture Research Center was instituted in June 1970 within the framework of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The Center holds an annual international symposium on tropical agriculture as an integral part of the activities of the Center.

In the past, symposia on various topics have been held, one of which was on "Maize Production in Southeast Asia", held in 1968. It offered an opportunity for the international exchange of information, as well as for making mutual acquaintances. It served to underscore the importance of maize as an agricultural crop.

In Southeast Asian countries, maize is an important food crop next to rice. Furthermore, it plays an important role in improving the nutrition of people in these countries through development of the livestock industry and in some countries it is a very important export crop for earning foreign currency. Despite great efforts, however, the yield of maize in Asia has remained at an average of 1.8 tons per hectare, lagging behind the world average of 2.5 to 2.8 tons.

Recently, efforts to increase maize production have met difficulties due to the lack of fertilizers and to the spread of the downy mildew disease. The damage caused by downy mildew on maize, in particular, is so serious that no further increase in maize production can be expected without measures to control disease. Because of this, the Center is holding this current symposium on "The Downy Mildew of Maize".

This meeting is being held in close cooperation with the Inter Asian Corn Program which has made great contributions to the development of maize production in Asia for a long time. I would like to commend the opening of this symposium at this most opportune time.

My gratitude goes to the staff of the Inter Asian Corn Program who have willingly agreed to hold this symposium jointly with the Center. And to all the distinguished participants from abroad, I give my thanks.

I sincerely hope that all of you will discuss extensively the excellent reports presented to this symposium in order to find out effective and practical countermeasures for the control of the distressing downy mildew disease.

Finally, I am certainly hopeful that this symposium will yield successful results and that the stay in Japan of all overseas participants will be a pleasant and fruitful one.

Thank you